



Capital Investment Panel

26th January 2021

From Kelly Eaton – Parks, Policy
and Projects Manager

For Action

Wards affected:
All

Parks Improvement Programme Business case

1.0 Summary

The Parks Service is seeking to invest in and improve various areas of aging infrastructure across the borough's Parks; including pathways and playgrounds. Funding would also seek to install a number of new welcome notice boards with improved maps of each location, wildflower meadow information boards and to make infrastructure improvements to our allotments with new fencing, pathways and new sustainable toilets.

- 1.1** The Parks revenue budget has been reduced in the last few years and much of the revenue budget is being spent on continual repairs of wearing infrastructure. Investment is sorely needed to prevent continual maintenance and to allow our parks to have pathways and playgrounds that are safe to use for all who visit.
- 1.2** The service has received many requests for repair and investment from local ward councillors and residents. Those areas, which have received the most correspondence, as well as pose the highest risk to park users of injury and insurance claims are detailed below.
- 1.3** The Parks Service is seeking alternative funding through CIL and S106 for other projects in some of our parks; mainly in the Alperton ward, however the projects proposed in this plan are very wide ranging and affect a number of wards and there are no other sources of finance currently available.
- 1.4** A request is sought therefore for Capital funding equating to a total of £1.5m, encompassing six separate projects. The funding will allow the improvement works to be undertaken across the 2021/22 financial year.

- 1.5** The funding will also provide for increased use of our parks, as was demonstrated during 2020. Our parks had never been busier and investment is sorely needed at a level that cannot be provided through revenue and annual maintenance alone.
- 1.6** A wide range of projects are scoped in this document, which will allow for a greater number of improvements across a variety of parks and allotments in the borough. S106 and CIL funding is more ward specific, hence this request to allow borough wide improvements.

2.0 Recommendations

That the Investment Panel:

- 2.1** Approve the projects detailed below totalling £1.5m, to allow all projects to proceed during 2021/22 financial year.

3.0 Detail

The Parks Service is seeking funding for six separate project areas that together come to just under £1.5m. Detail of each of the six projects and its relevant costing is provided below. A table is also included below to allow ease of reference regarding each project and its associated cost.

Project	Cost
Parks Pathways replacements	£239,544
Allotments Pathways, fencing and toilets	£235,700
Children's Playgrounds – resurfacing and new equipment	£511,000
Biodiversity Education and Welcome Boards	£280,000
CCTV in Parks Pavillions	£117,550
Drainage system at Eton Grove Pavillion	£60,000
TOTAL	£1,443,794

Parks Pathways. There are six main pathways in different parks that are in desperate need of replacement. Some are full of potholes; some are ridged and cracked and some are overgrown and becoming trip hazards. The pathways are in the following parks. Leybourne Open Space access path, Roe Green desire line pathway from Kingsbury High Road to the walled garden, Gladstone Park main path from the station bridge to the centre of the park, Neasden Recreation Ground pathway to the reservoir, Longstone Avenue entrance pathway and the pathway next to the school at King Edward VII Wembley. Some of the paths will be replaced with tarmac, others with Breendon gravel, which better supports drainage of rain water and heavy downpours. The total cost of pathway replacement is £239,544.

Allotments improvement works. There are six allotment sites, which require lengths of new pathways in breedon gravel to improve accessibility for tenants. The cost of this work is £110,000. There is also boundary fencing works required at a further six sites at a total cost of £68,700.

We would also like to install three new waterless toilets in the last three of our allotment sites that have no toilet provision. The toilets are environmentally friendly and allow site users to remain on site for much longer at each visit. The cost of installation of three sites will be £30,000.

There is one further project required in our allotments, which is to create a car parking space within Cecil Road allotment site and improved PROW access. Creation of this car parking area will resolve a longstanding issue of a lack of parking for tenants of this site and will cost around £27,000.

Children's Playgrounds. The safety surfacing is deteriorating in a large number of children's playgrounds in our parks. Funding is sought to replace the safety surfacing rather than carry out patch repairs, which tend to cause additional issues across the surface. The total cost of resurfacing across 20 sites will be £131,000.

In addition, we would like to overhaul the play equipment in Roundwood Park, and add in one or two new pieces in Tiverton Playgrounds, something that we have had discussions with over the last year with the local residents association. The expected expenditure on this project is around £380,000.

Meadow area educational boards and new parks welcome boards. The wildflower meadows have been very successful and we are now looking to install educational information boards to advise visitors of the flowers and wildlife they can expect to find at each location. We are looking to install between one and two information boards per location and further would like to design and create new welcome boards for the main parks with meadows that provide visitors with an overview map of the map detailing the available facilities. The expected cost of design, creation and installation of these boards is £280,000.

CCTV upgrade in Parks Pavilions. Our pavilions are subject to multiple incidences of vandalism, whether it is windows being smashed, graffiti or guttering and roof tiles being damaged deliberately. Our pavillions have a very antiquated CCTV system; and we are looking to upgrade the system at each location and link in where possible to the council's CCTV room. The cost of providing this at each location is £4,650. There are seven pavillions that we would seek to carry out this upgrade to; bringing the cost to £32,550.

In addition, because of a number of specific anti-social behaviour issues at Northwick Park and Gladstone Park; we would seek to install one directional post CCTV camera; directly linked to the councils control room at an estimated cost of £85,000, which will include all electrical work and connections with UKPN.

Redevelop the drainage system at Eton Grove Pavillion. The Parks service has been unable to hire out Eton Grove Pavilion for cricket bookings for the last two years because of a problem with the clean and foul water drainage systems. When the pavillion was renovated about five years ago, it was not connected to the mains water system and a cesspit was installed. However, there is an issue with the cesspit in that it is filling up with clean water from an unknown source at an excessive rate of flow, meaning that the pavillions cannot be opened or use. This is creating a loss of income for the parks service in a lack of cricket bookings, Multiple investigations into the cause of the issue have failed to come up with a solution, other than completely remove the cess pit and seek a full mains

connection for all water sources from the pavillion, The estimated costs of this project are around £60,000,

3.1 Objectives

The main objective of the improvements is to allow for the largest projects within Brent Parks to be carried out with capital expenditure rather than revenue. The Parks Budget is minimal and constant repairs to an old infrastructure is draining the budget. The aim of this bid is to invest in capital projects that will seek to improve and develop the existing facilities rather than spend small but regular amounts in continual maintenance.

Investment in our parks is essential. This year has demonstrated the high demand that as required of our parks and open spaces. Such high demand requires a quality infrastructure with pathways that are flat to allow for walking, cycling and jogging. It also requires the surfaces of our playgrounds to be safe for use by children and our pavillions to be protected from vandalism. We also want to be able to provide education to visitors about the biodiversity to be found when visiting and enhance their experience.

3.2 Options Appraisal

In taking a 'do nothing' approach, the existing infrastructure will continue to require constant repairs, draining the revenue budget; which has already been reduced by £200k in previous efficiency savings activities. Pathways will continue to deteriorate and crack, the service will continue to receive complaints about failing infrastructure and we are risk of health and safety issues in our playgrounds and insurance claims. The surfacing of many children's playgrounds is becoming lifted at edges, creating potential trip hazards in areas that should be safe for children to run around in. We are also receiving many complaints about pathways, which are dangerous to those with mobility issues, or creating trip hazards for park users. We do not want to have to deal with insurance claims about people falling over and injuring themselves due to a lack of maintenance. We have already had to respond to one such claim and if we do nothing, the service is at a higher risk of receiving more, similar insurance claims.

Alternative sources of finance are limited on the scale that is required to invest in our parks and allotments as set out in this paper.

If there is no investment in our parks, we will only be able to continue to carry out minor repairs and it will take many years to conduct the projects set out above, whilst further deterioration also takes place.

Investment is sought to ensure that the maintenance budget is spent on carrying out tree works and other general maintenance issues that occur on a daily basis, but are not substantial infrastructure projects.

3.3 Benefits to council

Description of Benefit	Financial/ non-financial benefit?	Estimated benefit amount?	When will the benefit be realised?	One-off or recurring?
Improved infrastructure for parks visitors and allotment users with a reduced risk of insurance claims and adverse press.	Non-financial	Visitors will be able to enjoy improved facilities and their visits will be enhanced by a reduction in trip hazards and an improved visual appearance. We are likely to see a reduction in possible insurance claims and an increase in positive press which is invaluable.	2021/22	Recurring
Improved opportunities for income generation	Financial	Improved facilities would lead to increased revenue to the parks service; by the ability to be able to lease out Eton Grove pavilion to cricket players in 2021.	2021	Recurring
Educational opportunities for residents to understand the range of wildflowers and nature in our meadow areas	Non-financial	There is a large benefit in connecting people to nature in our parks.	2021	Recurring
Improved reputation as a borough that is shown to invest in its green spaces for the benefit of all visitors	Non-financial	There is no price that can be associated with good press and reviews from local residents, but word will spread very quickly that we are a borough that truly values its green spaces.	2022	Recurring

3.4 Alignment with strategic objectives

The above project contributes specifically towards the following Council strategic objectives of:

- 1) A borough where we can all feel safe, secure, happy and healthy
- 2) Strong Foundations

3.5 Timescales

The key milestones are set out in the table below.

Milestone	Start	Finish
Project placed on the Capital Pipeline	December 2020	December 2020
Project approval at Capital Investment Panel/PCG	January 2021	January 2021
Project able to start with seeking quotes for surveys	April 2021	April 2021
Project Completion	March 2022	March 2022

3.6 Procurement

The Council's internal procurement process will be followed with regards seeking quotes and where necessary, tenders, for the works to be carried out. Many quotes have already been obtained from contractors to allow for more accuracy in costing the total proposal.

3.7 Risks

Risk/issue description (incl. impact)	Planned mitigation or resolution	Owner
That only some of the projects are approved for funding.	To seek alternative sources of funding to allow investment to be made in all the areas mentioned in this proposal.	Kelly Eaton
That none of the projects are approved for funding.	Parks infrastructure will continue to deteriorate putting incredible pressure on the revenue budget. Only emergency works will be able to be undertaken during the next financial year.	Kelly Eaton
Health and safety risk of injury to park users and children in playgrounds	Playgrounds and pathways that are considered to be unsafe will need to be closed.	Kelly Eaton
A higher amount of insurance claims are received in relation to injuries caused by our damaged pathways or playgrounds	Invest in the areas mentioned in this report to prevent the risk of claim. The other mitigation is to start to close playground areas and pathways that we cannot afford to repair.	Kelly Eaton
Our reputation is damaged because of a serious injury sustained in our parks because we are not choosing to invest	Invest in the areas that are mentioned in this report to demonstrate that we are investing in our parks for the	Kelly Eaton

<p>and are only patching up problems. With greater usage of our parks, and others, we will be compared to other boroughs very quickly concerning the condition of our parks. Social media now allows for very fast communication about a problem as well as about good news.</p>	<p>benefit of all visitors. Without the investment, we will need to start closing areas of parks to the public, which will cause reputation damage that is difficult to come back from.</p>	
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3.8 Assumptions

The main assumption is that if there is no investment made into the capital works required, the basic infrastructure of our parks will continue to deteriorate. The Parks revenue budget is insufficient to continue to carry out minor repairs to patch up the issues that area raised in this report. The assumption is that this investment in our parks will allow us to develop public interest in our open spaces and demonstrate to local residents that are serious about providing safe, well-maintained green spaces for them to enjoy.

It is expected that all work will be undertaken within the budget sought.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 The Parks Service is looking for capital funding where there is no available CIL or S106 funding. Working closely with colleagues in Regeneration there are a number of parks where s106 and CIL funding is available to allow for larger scale improvement projects; mainly in the Alperton ward. These projects and those with separate identifiable funding opportunities have been excluded from this proposal; leaving only those projects which require serious capital investment.

4.2 Development Appraisal

The Council has experienced officers who have managed projects of this nature previously and the work will greatly improve the facilities available to all visitors to our parks and open spaces.

5. Legal Implications

None.

6. Diversity Implications

The suggested improvements will allow for DDA compliant pathways to replace existing pathways which are overgrown, cracked and uneven. The improvements suggested to the playgrounds will allow for new equipment to be installed which will widen the range of play equipment that can be used by children with disabilities.

7. Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

None